

Combat Boot Basketball

By SSgt Charles Frye, Jr., Beale AFB, Calif.

There I was supporting Operation SOUTHERN WATCH at Prince Sultan Air Base in sunny Saudi Arabia. As you can imagine, things can get a little boring after doing the same thing day after day. So I took it upon myself to raise my morale and challenge Maintenance to a friendly game of basketball. When the flights were off and work was completed for the day, it was time for basketball. Almost immediately the trash talk started and it was on.

Everyone got their game faces on and we started playing. About halfway through the game I went to block a shot and ended up coming down on the side of my ankle, I tried to get up but I wasn't going anywhere. My whole leg froze up and even with my adrenaline flowing, I immediately knew something was wrong. Being behind at the time, everyone thought I was faking my injury and was trying to delay or forfeit the game. I knew there was no way I could take my boot

off using the common method, so I cut it off. The sight of my leg made believers out of everyone. My ankle looked like I taped a softball to it. We called the flight surgeon and he put me in an air cast and transported me to the base clinic.

When the x-rays came back, I initially hoped it might be a torn ligament or something similar but it was a break all right, in three places. Luckily, the break was in a spiral fracture and I didn't need any plates or screws, so they just slapped a cast on

my leg, gave me some Motrin, and I was on my way. During the whole cast fitting process I received a very long lecture on the proper exercise and sports attire to wear in the future. I didn't really think of all the injuries that I could get when all the trash was being talked prior to the game. When I had some time to think about it later, it was pretty dumb of me to try and play basketball in my desert combat boots and desert cammies (DCUs).

I would almost guarantee that if I had on the proper sports attire my injury would not have happened. In fact we would have won, maybe. Being at a base where there was a chemical threat, there was no way I could stay with a cast on my leg, as strange as it may seem I really wanted to. My commander did what he had to and I was on the first rotator back home.

If you have ever flown right after you've broken a leg, then you know it's nothing but pain, I had to get both sides of the cast cut from my knee to my foot and then rewrapped because of the swelling on the long flight. After four flights, carrying two suitcases and a C-3 bag, I finally arrived safely at home.

To this day I can't even touch a basketball and my ankle tells me when there's going to be rain. That will always be a constant reminder to me why it is always important to wear proper sports attire or safety gear during strenuous activities, because you never know when you might land wrong. ►

